



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

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Ref:DV205-01
September 5, 2001

TO: Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Helena, 59620-1704
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Planning, Prevention & Assistance, PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620-0901
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Permitting Compliance, PO Box 200901, Helena, 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks: Director's Office - Chris Smith; Fisheries Division - Karen Zackheim; Legal Unit
MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, 225 North Roberts, Veteran's Memorial Building, Helena, 59620-1201
Montana State Library, 1515 East Sixth Ave., Helena, 59620-1800
Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, PO Box 1184, Helena, 59624
George Ochenski, PO Box 689, Helena, 59624
Wayne Hirst, Montana State Parks Foundation, PO Box 728, Libby, 59923
Montana State Parks Association, PO Box 699, Billings, 59103
Joe Gutkoski, President, Montana River Action Network, 304 N 18th Ave., Bozeman, 59715
Rep. Verdell Jackson, 555 Wagner Lane, Kalispell, 59901-8079
Sen. Bob DePratu, PO Box 1217, Whitefish, 59937-1217
Rep. Aubyn Curtiss, PO Box 216, Fortine, 59918-0216
Sen. William Crismore, 237 Airfield Road S, Libby, 59923-8600
Flathead County Commissioners, 800 S Main, Kalispell, 59901
Lincoln County Commissioners, 512 California Avenue, Libby, 59923
Flathead County Library, 247 First Avenue E, Kalispell, 59901
Lincoln County Library, 220 W 6th Street, Libby, 59923
Glen Anacker, Trout Unlimited, PO Box 638, Kalispell, 59903-0638
Bruce Farling, Executive Director, MT Trout Unlimited, Box 7186, Missoula, 59807
Plum Creek Timber, Flathead Unit, PO Box 8990, Kalispell, 59904
Thad Briggs, PO Box 8062, Kalispell, 59901

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Flathead National Forest has completed an environmental assessment for the eastern brook trout suppression project in Sheppard Creek (Stillwater watershed) (T30N, R25W S17, T30N, R26W, S13, 22, 23, & 24) in Flathead and Lincoln counties. The objective of the project is to suppress the eastern brook trout for the purpose of relieving competitive pressure on the westslope cutthroat trout populations.

There were no changes to the draft EA; therefore, the draft becomes the final EA. A copy of the Decision Document is enclosed for your information.

Sincerely,

Daniel P. Vincent
Regional Supervisor

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Enclosure

**Environmental Assessment
and
Decision Notice
for the
Sheppard Creek Eastern Brook Trout
Suppression Project**

September 4, 2001

Project Proposal and Justification: Westslope cutthroat are listed as a Species of Special Concern in the state of Montana due to decreases in abundance and distribution from historical range. Part of the decrease is due to competition with and predation by introduced nonnative fish including eastern brook trout. Sheppard Creek in the Stillwater drainage has been identified as a site where brook trout have severely impacted westslope cutthroat. The purpose of this project is to suppress brook trout through electrofishing to shift the competitive edge to westslope cutthroat while long-term solutions are developed.


Site Location: Sheppard Creek is located in the Stillwater Drainage near Tally Lake (T30N, R25W, S17; T30N, R26W, S13, 22, 23, & 24) in Flathead and Lincoln counties. This project would involve about five miles of stream, including minor tributaries upstream from the road culvert at FDR538B (Sylvia Lake Road).

Environmental and Social Impacts: This project will cause at least short-term suppression of brook trout. Loss of angling recreation should be minor due to the remote and rugged nature of the fishery and the small size of brook trout. Westslope cutthroat should increase in abundance and fill some of the demand.

Public Involvement: An environmental assessment was prepared and circulated for public comment from August 3, 2001, through September 2, 2001. Notices were advertised in local newspapers and a news release, and copies were made available through the Kalispell office of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Tally Lake Ranger District of the U. S. Forest Service.

During the public comment period, three comments were received. Montana Trout Unlimited supported the project, but recommended finding a longer-term solution. The Montana Historical Society noted there were cultural sites in the area, but the proposed activity should not affect them. An individual, Thad Briggs, supported the project, but asked for salvage or relocation of as many brook trout as possible, while conceding the remote nature of the area made that mostly unrealistic.

Decision Notice: Based on the purpose and justification of the project, the environmental assessment, and public comments received, I recommend the proposed project be implemented to suppress eastern brook trout in Sheppard Creek.


Daniel P. Vincent, Regional Supervisor

9/4/01

Date